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| ISSUE # 0. NOV. 2016.
| editors@moni.press

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HELLO and welcome to the zeroth issue of MONI, a new SF/politics quarterly. We are interested in analyzing SF's political and aesthetic history to produce works that better anticipate the genre's future.

Cover Art: M. Shirow, *New Dominion Tank Police*, 1993

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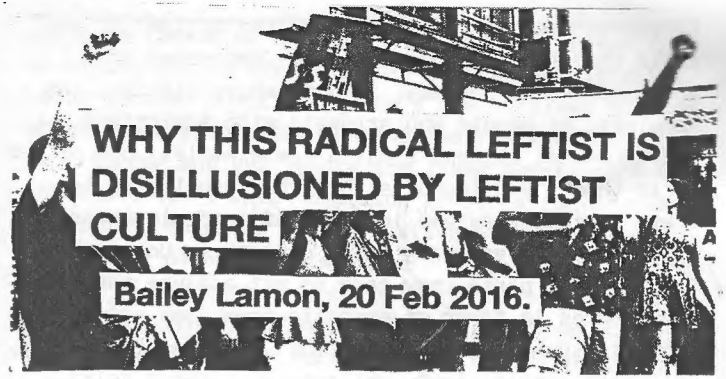

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I will always believe in "The Revolution". But I am becoming very frustrated with modern "activist" culture.

First of all, I'm tired of watching people turn into pretentious assholes who think their activism makes them better than everyone else, even those oppressed and marginalized groups with whom they claim "allyship".

B. Lamon, "Why This Radical Leftist is Disillusioned by Leftist Culture", *Medium*, 2016-02-20. [Online]. Available: https://medium.com/@UptheCypherPunx/why-this-radical-leftist-is-disillusioned-by-leftist-culture-63419aa85a58#.dd4no5z6m.

If you've ever worked in the shelter system, or any field that serves those deemed as oppressed or marginalized in any way, such as abuse victims, the homeless, or people who struggle with addictions and/or mental illness (just a few examples)…one of the first things you learn is that they usually do not frame their worldviews in terms of academic theories you learned in gender studies classes in University. For the most part, they tend to not analyze their experiences in terms of systemic power and privilege, concepts such as "the patriarchy", "white privilege", or "heteronormativity". While many of these folks are directly impacted by class inequality and do realize it, they are likely not spending their days and nights reading Karl Marx, educating themselves on the intricacies of capitalism. They do not sit around pondering the effects of "problematic behaviours" in radical communities. They are not concerned with checking their privilege. No. They are busy trying to survive. Getting through the next day. Meeting their basic needs such as food, shelter and hygiene. They do not bother with policing their language and worrying about how their words might unintentionally perpetuate certain stereotypes. They are more concerned with their voices being heard in the first place.

And yet I witness so many "activists" who claim to care about those at the bottom of society ignoring the realities of oppression, as if being offended by a person's speech or worldview is equal to prison time or living on the streets. They talk about listening, being humble, questioning one's preconceived notions about other people and hearing their lived experiences…and yet ignore the lived experiences of those who don't speak or think properly in the view of university-educated social justice warriors, regardless of how much worse off they really are. That is not to say that we should accept bigotry in any form – far from it. But I would go as far as saying that the politically correct mafia on the left perpetuates a form of bigotry on its own because it alienates and "otherizes" those who do not share their ways of thinking and speaking about the world.

I'm tired of the cliques, the hierarchies, the policing of others, and the power imbalances that exist between people who claim to be friends and comrades. I am exhausted and saddened by the fact that any type of disagreement or difference of opinion in an activist circle will lead to a fight, which sometimes includes abandonment of certain people, deeming them "unsafe" as well as public shaming and slander. It is disgusting that we claim to be building a new world, a new society, a better way of dealing with social problems – but if a person makes a mistake, says and/or does something wrong, they are not even given a chance to explain their side of what happened because the process of conflict resolution is in itself driven by ideology rather than a willingness

to understand facts. Actually, in today's activist circles one is lucky to be given any sort of due process at all, while everyone is put under social pressure to believe everything they are told regardless of what actually occurred in a given situation. This is not freedom. This is not social justice. There is nothing "progressive" or "radical" about it, unless you are referring to fascism.

Speaking of Fascism, there is also a disturbing trend on the left nowadays that involves rejecting free speech/freedom of expression as a core value, because that speech could possibly be hurtful to someone, somewhere. This is not only dangerous but it also works against us, because as leftists we are often labelled as threats by the state and at the very least, we are unpopular by society in general. Does this not mean that freedom of thought and expression are crucial to our struggles? That we should always defend our right to question what we're taught, our right to be different? As Noam Chomsky put it: "If we don't believe in freedom of expression for people we despise, we don't believe in it at all." Freedom of expression and the like does not mean we have to agree with what another person says…in fact, it means that when we do not, we certainly have the right to challenge it. But what myself and many others are seeing is the shutting off of dialogue entirely, for the purpose of "safety". What could possibly be safe about censorship? What could possibly be safe about a group of people who claim to be freedom fighters dictating who can speak and what can be said, based on whether or not we agree with them? Study any kind of world history and you will find that censorship has never been on the right side of it.

More to the point, the world is not a safe place. It is extremely dangerous, flawed, full of bloodshed and corruption. By sheltering ourselves from its harshness we are doing nothing meaningful to change it. If we are serious about confronting power we must throw ourselves into the danger and hurt that so many people have no choice but to live with. While self-care is necessary to sustain us in the long run, avoiding the darkness entirely is nothing more than a cop out.

Folks, do the world a favour…stop with the safe spaces and trigger warnings, and get serious about changing the world. It is not always going to be fun and pleasant. We are not always going to feel liberated. It is going to hurt. It is going to scare the shit out of us at times. But if the struggle is worth it to you, if activism is not just a trendy thing for you to be involved with so you can convince yourself that you're not complacent in injustices, then you will step out of your comfort zone and finally understand that comfort is in itself a sign of the power and privilege you wish to challenge.

Future sickness. That's all the computer could conjure. Devs sat facing the Minerva C class Medical Droid, under the green strobed doctors office, at the Daysure Public Health Facility. No physical anomaly could be detected that would even warrant this machine's time. Too many modifications added too hastily with the unforeseen hidden fee of a little humanity. The droid paused momentarily, the computer generated doctor face on the screen of its head had a question mark next to what Devs could only assume was a look of deep thought. "Are you sleeping Devlin?" finally came from the droid's speakers. "No, I got a neural stim for my spider back in 09, my first actually before my nutrition and water stims." In all actuality, Devs knew this miasma of sadness took root in him seeking out a Spider Neural Enhancer. The Spider consisted of 8 arachnid looking micro needles that fed certain electrolytes and supplements into the brain, thus making certain functionalities of everyday life an ease. Minerva manufactured and FDA approved, this truly was the supremacy of human bioengineering. Of course, no citizen of Ciro City could actually afford the 400,000 credit price tag that came with these augmentations. Instead you entered a special terms of service. These terms being 20 years of work or 'credit paths' to the newly set up Minerva Industries. The most common of these paths being customer assistant work in one of the Mega Marts or some bureaucratic position. With these came a room in one of the Minerva Birds Nest complex's and a few extra credits every 3 months. "As I see no abnormalities in you I can only recommend speaking with a Minerva operative to have your sleep deprivation stimulant removed. I believe you rushed your brain with a large amount of stimulants in too short a time. On occasion this can cause Bioengineerial Cognotive Fatigue or 'future sickness' as it's more commonly called. Please collect your receipt from the fax'n'print and have a nice day Mr

Myers." After a defeated sigh, Devs grabbed his receipt and left. 20 credits to tell him what he already knew. He put on his Semten Soundfones and put in what came to be his walking tape. A 25 track cassette of all the new hits, picked up at an extreme discount in the alley behind his nest building. The low sun of the evening cast a blood orange over Ciro City when Devs finally reached his nest. He keyed in 0451 for the crane elevator to take him up and into the 4th floor. The standard fee for a stim removal was 5000 credits. The only sleep Devs would be able to get was something a shade more permanent. He had always been fascinated with death. The idea of death of just fell like a transfer of consciousness and nothing more. It began when Gaia VR systems had developed a new type of game that would transfer your conscious self into a virtual world where you take quests in a kingdom of old and battle knights etc. The system consisted of a a metallic, slab like lounge chair that you lay on and a series of pulsing sensors to place on certain pressure points of the body. Finally, a carbon black helmet was placed over the head and wraparound Atlas 1 goggles were placed over the eyes. This was, at the time, the absolute apex in VR gaming. But as it turned out Gaia had been selling users financial information to overseas companies who filtered funds straight from the public. After Gaia refused to refund customers or take any responsibility for their actions, protests took place nationwide, leading to military intervention and the deaths of about 2000 citizens including Devs parents. Over the 14 years since then, aged 24, Devs lived a very stoic existence. Ever since sustenance no longer needed to be bought, he knew how he wanted to leave. This time, he wanted them alerted to their failure. That they couldn't cradle humanity to happiness in this cybernetic crib. Step one was simple: purchase a length of Termatheen rope which would hold the weight of a Vertaship and would guarantee Devs neck would snap. Jumping from a roof was impossible considering building roofs were virtually unscalable because Ciro's citywide security. Any drugs in his system would be detected and his stims wouldn't let him perish. At worst he would be comatose. And Minerva would be alerted, his stims would need upgrading and he would be billed and contract extended. That thought was twice as nightmarish. Step two: travel to Karoshi Forrest. A silver shuttle ride 300 miles north would take roughly 15 minutes. Step three: dispose of his mobile caller. Devs arrived at the outskirts of Karoshi Forrest by 3pm. The forest was about 1000 Km of vegetation. It was time to go. This isn't for us he thought. Biology had had its day. One final midnight. Time to go. With this he entered. He walked for about 4 hours before he came across the tree. His tree. It was godlike, piercing the sky. His Yggdrasil. The climb began. Every branch was a jump rather than a step, the first 2 having snapped as he jumped up. With a 15ft gap at the bottom now without anyway down there really was no turning back. With only about 60ft of rope and the heights getting to him he stopped at what seemed to him like 100 feet but couldn't have been

more than 50. He tied the rope as tight as possible both end giving several hard tugs to test the knot. Solid. He left a small gap in the rope to assure it would sever his vertebrae. He has read a full article on asphyxia suicide before he had left. With one final sigh he closed his eyes and simply dropped from his seated position. With the rushing of the wind he closed his eyes. Thud. A sharp vibration in his head and with it he saw a message before his eyes. Was he dreaming? No, he had seen something like this before when he first had the Spider installed. This message was different. It was in a burning glowing red that blur and fuzzed with Dev's vision. 'User Spider damage. GPS capabilities severely damaged. Current GPS status: offline.' Devs was pulling breaths like they were tar, gasping, screaming inside. Pain had arrived. His ankles were destroyed. The rope was suspending him upright but letting his feet flat on the ground. 'All other stims are functioning at full capacity. Please contact your local Minerva representative for a full diagnosis.' There was no way up the tree again and Devs found he could only move about a foot in any direction. He scratched and pulled at the rope on his neck like a coyote with its paw in a trap. Futile. He was pulling at his jaw and back of his head like he could walk away without it. Not that he could walk stuck or not. The truth sat cold with him. You are alone for miles around. You have all the nutrients you will ever need. You are not leaving this tree.

A POLITICAL HISTORY OF SF

Eric S. Raymond - 08 Feb 2007

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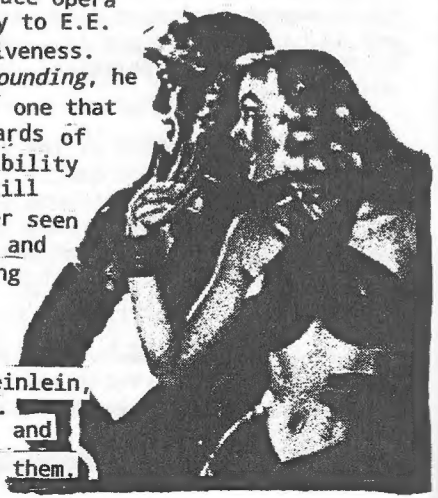
The history of modern SF is one of five attempted revolutions – one success and four enriching failures. I'm going to offer you a look at them from an unusual angle, a political one. This turns out to be useful perspective because more of the history of SF than one might expect is intertwined with political questions, and SF had an important role in giving birth to at least one distinct political ideology that is alive and important today.

The first and greatest of the revolutions came out of the minds of John Wood Campbell and Robert Heinlein, the editor and the author who invented modern science fiction. The pivotal year was 1937, when John Campbell took over the editorship of *Astounding Science Fiction*. He published Robert Heinlein's first story a little over a year later.

E.S. Raymond, "A Political History of SF", Eric S. Raymond's Home Page, 2007-02-08. [Online]. Available: http://www.catb.org/esr/writings/sf-history.html.

Pre-Campbellian science fiction had bubbled up from the American pulp magazines of the 1910s and 1920s, inspired by pioneers like Jules Verne and H.G. Wells and promoted by the indefatigable Hugo Gernsback (who had a better claim than anyone else to have invented the genre as a genre, and consequently got SF's equivalent of the Oscar named after him). Early "scientifiction" mostly recycled an endless series of cardboard cliches: mad scientists, lost races, menacing bug-eyed monsters, coruscating death rays, and screaming blondes in brass underwear. With a very few exceptions (like E.E. "Doc" Smith's *Skylark of Space* and sequels) the stuff was teeth-jarringly bad; unless you have a specialist interest in the history of the genre I don't recommend seeking it out.

John Campbell had been one of the leading writers of space opera from 1930, second only to E.E. "Doc" Smith in inventiveness. When he took over *Astounding*, he did so with a vision: one that demanded higher standards of both scientific plausibility and story-crafting skill than the field had ever seen before. He discovered and trained a group of young writers who would dominate the field for most of the next fifty years. Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Poul Anderson, and Hal Clement were among them.



Robert A. Heinlein, 1929.

Heinlein was the first of Campbell's discoveries and, in the end, the greatest. It was Heinlein who introduced into SF the technique of description by indirection — the art of describing his future worlds not through lumps of exposition but by presenting it through the eyes of his characters, subtly leading the reader to fill in by deduction large swathes of background that a lesser author would have drawn in detail.

(Many accounts have it that Heinlein *invented* SFnal exposition by indirection, but credit for that innovation may be due to none other than Rudyard Kipling, whose 1912 story With The Night Mail anticipated the style and expository mechanics of Campbellian hard science fiction fourteen years before Hugo Gernsback's invention of the "scientifiction" genre and twenty-seven years before Heinlein's first publication. Heinlein professed high regard for Kipling all his life and included tributes to Kipling in several of his works; it is possible, even probable, that he saw himself as Kipling's literary successor.)

From World War II into the 1950s Campbell's writers – many working scientists and engineers who knew leading-edge technology from the inside – created the Golden Age of science fiction. Other SF pulpzines competing with *Astounding* raised their standards and new ones were founded. The field took the form of an extended conversation, a kind of proto-futurology worked out through stories that often implicitly commented on each other.

While space operas and easy adventure stories continued to be written, the center of the Campbellian revolution was "hard SF", a form that made particularly stringent demands on both author and reader. Hard SF demanded that the science be consistent both internally and with known science about the real world, permitting only a bare minimum of McGuffins like faster-than-light star drives. Hard SF stories could be, and were, mercilessly slammed because the author had calculated an orbit or gotten a detail of physics or biology wrong. Readers, on the other hand, needed to be scientifically literate to appreciate the full beauty of what the authors were doing.

There was also a political aura that went with the hard-SF style, one exemplified by Campbell and right-hand man Robert Heinlein. That tradition was of ornery and insistant individualism, veneration of the competent man, an instinctive distrust of coercive social engineering and a rock-ribbed objectivism that that valued knowing how things work and treated all political ideologizing with suspicion. Exceptions like Asimov's *Foundation* novels only threw the implicit politics of most other Campbellian SF into sharper relief.

At the time, this very American position was generally thought of by both allies and opponents as a conservative or right-wing one. But the SF community's version was never conservative in the strict sense of venerating past social norms – how could it be, when SF literature cheerfully contemplated radical changes in social arrangements and even human nature itself? SF's insistent individualism also led it to reject racism and feature strong female characters decades before the rise of political correctness ritualized these behaviors in other forms of art.

Nevertheless, some writers found the confines of the field too narrow, or rejected Campbellian orthodoxy for other reasons. The first revolt against hard SF came in the early 1950s from a group of young writers centered around Frederik Pohl and the Futurians fan club in New York. The Futurians invented a kind of SF in which science was not at the center, and the transformative change motivating the story was not technological but political or social. Much of their output was sharply satirical in tone, and tended to de-emphasize individual heroism. The Futurian masterpiece was the Frederik Pohl/Cyril Kornbluth collaboration *The Space Merchants* (1956).

The Futurian revolt was political as well as aesthetic. Not until the late 1970s did any the participants admit that many of the key Futurians had histories as ideological Communists or fellow travellers, and that fact remained relatively unknown in the field well into the 1990s. As with later revolts against the Campbellian tradition, part of the motivation was a desire to escape the "conservative" politics that went with that tradition. While the Futurians' work was well understood at the time to be a poke at the consumer capitalism and smugness of the postwar years, only in retrospect is it clear how much they owed to the Frankfurt school of Marxist critical theory.

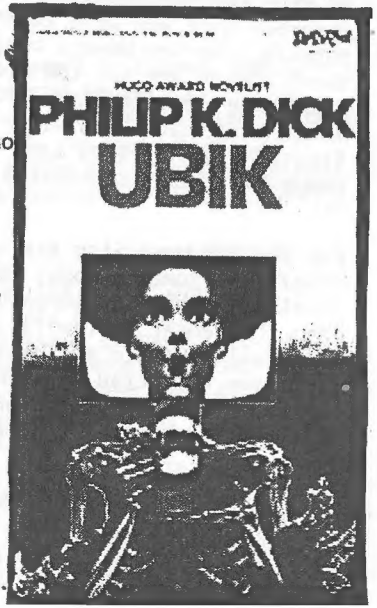
But the Futurian revolt was half-hearted, semi-covert, and easily absorbed by the Campbellian mainstream of the SF field; by the mid-1960s, sociological extrapolation had become a standard part of the toolkit even for the old-school Golden Agers, and it never challenged the centrality of hard SF. The Futurians' Marxist underpinnings lay buried and undiscussed for decades after the fact.

Perception of Campbellian SF as a "right-wing" phenomenon lingered, however, and helped motivate the next revolt in the mid-1960s, around the time I started reading the stuff. The field was in bad shape then, though I lacked the perspective to see so at the time. The death of the pulp-zines in the 1950s had pretty much killed off the SF short-fiction market, and the post-Star-Wars boom that would make SF the second most successful fiction genre after romances was still a decade in the future.

The early Golden Agers were hitting the thirty-year mark in their writing careers, and although some would find a second wind in later decades many were beginning to get a bit stale. Heinlein reached his peak as a writer with 1967's *The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress* and, plagued by health problems, began a long decline.

These objective problems combined with, or perhaps led to, an insurgency within the field – the "New Wave", an attempt to import the techniques and imagery of literary fiction into SF. As with that of the Futurians, the New Wave was both a stylistic revolt and a political one.

The New Wave's inventors (notably Michael Moorcock, J.G. Ballard and Brian Aldiss) were British socialists and Marxists who rejected individualism, linear exposition, happy endings, scientific rigor and the U.S.'s cultural hegemony over the SF field in one fell swoop. The New Wave's later American exponents were strongly associated with the New Left and opposition to the Vietnam War, leading to some rancorous public disputes in which politics was tangled together with definitional questions about the nature of SF and the direction of the field.



But the New Wave, after 1965, was not so easily dismissed or assimilated as the Futurians had been. Amidst a great deal of self-indulgent crap and drug-fueled psychedelizing, there shone a few jewels – Brian Aldiss's *Hothouse* stories (1961, retrospectively recruited into the post-1965 New Wave by their author) Langdon Jones's *The Great Clock* (1966), Phillip José Farmer's *Riders of the Purple Wage* (1967), Harlan Ellison's *I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream* (1967), and Fritz Leiber's *One Station of the Way* (1968) stand out as examples.

As with the Futurians, the larger SF field rapidly absorbed some New Wave techniques and concerns. Notably, the New Wavers broke the SF taboo on writing about sex in any but the most cryptically coded ways, a stricture previously so rigid that only Heinlein himself had had the stature to really break it, in *Stranger In A Strange Land* (1961) – a book that helped shape the hippie counterculture of the later 1960s.

But the New Wave also exacerbated long-standing critical arguments about the nature of science fiction itself, and briefly threatened to displace hard SF from the center of the field. Brian Aldiss's 1969 dismissal of space exploration as "an old-fashioned diversion conducted with infertile phallic symbols" was typical New Wave rhetoric, and looked like it might have some legs at the time.

As a politico-cultural revolt against the American vision of SF, however, the New Wave eventually failed just as completely as the Futurians had. Its writers were already running out of steam in 1977 when *Star*

Wars, rather obviously patterned on Edmond Hamilton's *The Star Kings* (1949), took the imagery of pre-Campbellian space opera to the mainstream culture. The half-decade following (my college years, as it happened) was a period of drift and confusion only ended by the publication of David Brin's *Startide Rising* in 1982.

Brin, and his colleagues in the group that came to be known as the "Killer Bs" (Greg Bear and Gregory Benford), reasserted the primacy of hard SF done in the grand Campbellian manner. Campbell himself had died in 1971 right at the high-water mark of the New Wave, but Heinlein and Anderson and the other surviving luminaries of the Campbellian era had no trouble recognizing their inheritors. To everyone's surprise, the New Old Wave proved to be not just artistically successful but commercially popular as as well, with its writers becoming the first new stars of the post-1980 boom in SF publishing.

Before getting back to the Killer Bs and their Campbellian revival, I need to point out an important bit of background. Besides helping spawn the New Wave, the Vietnam War broke open a long-standing fissure in the "right" wing of American politics. One kind of right-winger was the cultural conservative, frequently with both religious and militarist beliefs. The other kind was the "classical-liberal" or small-government conservative. These two very different tendencies had been forced into alliance in both the U.S. and Great Britain by the rise of the socialist Left after 1910.

Barry Goldwater, 1962.

The aftermath of Barry Goldwater's failed presidential campaign in 1964 had strained the alliance between these factions almost to the breaking point. The Vietnam War broke it, at least for some. A mixed group of dissident classical liberals and anti-war radicals formed the Libertarian Party in 1971, repudiating both the right's cultural conservatism and the left's redistributionist statism.

This is worth noticing in a history of SF because the platform of the Libertarian Party read like a reinvented, radicalized and intellectualized form of the implicit politics of Campbellian hard SF. This was not a coincidence; many of the founding Libertarians were science-fiction fans. They drew inspiration not merely from the polemical political science fiction of Ayn Rand – *The Fountainhead* (1943); *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) – but from the entire canon of Campbellian SF.

Something rather similar had happened in the late 19th century, when Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward From The Year 2000* (1887) and various other works of utopian fiction now forgotten had helped shape the thinking of early Socialists. But this time the connection was more two-way and intimate; novels like Heinlein's *The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress* (1967), H. Beam Piper's *Lone Star Planet* (1958, originally as *A Planet For Texans*), and Poul Anderson's *No Truce With Kings* (1963), among many others, came to be seen retrospectively as proto-libertarian arguments not just by their readers but, often, by the authors of the novels themselves.

The new hard SF of the 1980s returned to Golden Age themes and images, if not quite with the linear simplicity of Golden Age technique. It also reverted to the anti-political/individualist values traditional in the field. This time around, with explicit libertarianism a feature of the political landscape, the split between order-worshiping conservatism and the individualist impulse was more marked. At one extreme, some SF (such as that of L. Neil Smith) assumed the character of radical libertarian propaganda. At the other extreme, a subgenre of SF that could fairly be described as conservative/militarist power fantasies emerged, notably in the writing of Jerry Pournelle and David Drake.

Tension between these groups sometimes flared into public animosity. Both laid claims to Robert Heinlein's legacy. Heinlein himself (increasingly erratic as a writer but still the Grand Old Man of the

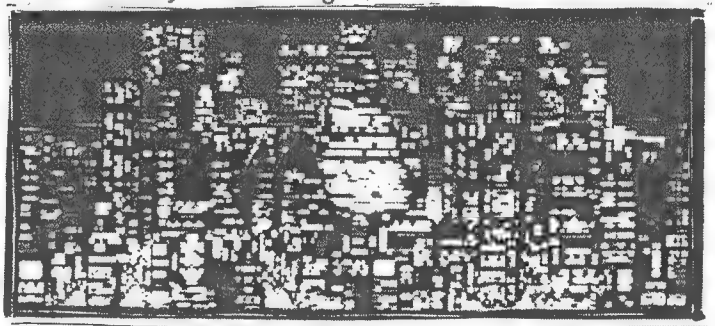
field, immensely respected by fans and even more by other authors) maintained friendly relationships with conservatives but described himself as a libertarian for more than a decade before his death in 1988.

Symbolically, Heinlein was the first among equals in a study commission of SF authors formed by Ronald Reagan to consider the feasibility of an anti-ballistic missile defense. Commission member Gregory Benford later described President Reagan as "a science fiction fan", and the vision that emerged as the Strategic Defense Initiative was startlingly SFnal. Reagan's threat to build SDI at the Reykjavik summit with Gorbachev in 1986 triggered the collapse of Soviet strategic ambitions as Mikhail Gorbachev realized that the Soviet Union could not match the U.S.'s raise in the geopolitical poker game. The Berlin Wall fell three years later and the Soviet Union collapsed three years after that; science fiction saved the world. Somewhere, Campbell and Heinlein were probably smiling.

Heinlein's personal evolution from New Deal left-liberal to Goldwater conservative to anti-statist radical both led and reflected larger trends. By the time of the Soviet Union's collapse in 1992, depictions of explicitly anarcho-libertarian future societies had begun to filter into non-political SF works like Vernor Vinge's *Realtime* sequence (1985) and Joe Haldeman's *Buying Time* (1989). Haldeman's Conch Republic and Novysibirsk were all the more convincing for not being subjects of polemic.

The 1980s also brought us a quasi-politicized movement pulling in the opposite direction – cyberpunk, the third failed revolution against Campbellian SF.

William Gibson, who is generally credited with launching this subgenre in his *Neuromancer* (1984), was not a political writer. But Bruce Sterling, who promoted Gibson and became the chief ideologue of anti-Campbellianism in the late 1980s, called cyberpunk "the Movement" in a self-conscious reference to the heady era of 1960s student radicalism. The cyberpunks positioned themselves particularly against the carnographic conservative military SF of Jerry Pournelle, David Drake, and their lower-rent imitators – not exactly a hard target.



Despite such posturing, the cyberpunks were neither as stylistically innovative nor as politically challenging as the New Wave had been. Gibson's prose has aptly been described as Raymond Chandler in mirror-shades. Cyberpunk themes (virtual reality, pervasive computing, cyborging and biosculpture, corporate feudalism) had been anticipated in earlier works like Frederik Pohl's *Day Million* (1966), Vernor Vinge's hard-SF classic *True Names* (1978), and even further back in *The Space Merchants* (1956). Cyberpunk imagery (decayed urban landscapes, buzzcuts, chrome and black leather) quickly became a cliche replicated in dozens of computer games.

Neal Stephenson wrote a satirical finis to the cyberpunk genre in *Snow Crash* (1992), which with Bruce Sterling's *Schismatrix* (1985) and Walter John Williams's *Hardwired* (1986) was very close to being the only work to meet the standard set by Neuromancer. While most cyberpunk took for granted a background in which capitalism had decayed into an oppressive corporate feudalism under which most individuals could be nothing but alienated and powerless, the future of *Snow Crash* was a tellingly libertarian one. The bedrock individualism of Campbellian SF reasserted itself with a smartass grin.

By the time cyberpunk fizzled out, most fans had been enjoying the hard-SF renaissance for a decade; the New Wave was long gone, and cyberpunk had attracted more notice outside the SF field than within it. The leaders of SF's tiny in-house critical establishment, however (figures like Samuel Delany and David Hartwell), remained fascinated by New Wave relics like Thomas Disch and Philip K. Dick, or anti-Campbellian fringe figures like Suzette Hadin Elgin and Octavia Butler.

While this was going on, the readers voted with their Hugo ballots largely for writers that were squarely within the Campbellian tradition — Golden Age survivors, the killer Bs, and newer writers like Lois McMaster Bujold and Greg Egan (whose 1997 work *Diaspora* may just be the single most audacious and brilliant hard-SF novel in the entire history of the field).

In 1994, critical thinking within the SF field belatedly caught up with reality. Credit for this goes to David Hartwell and Kathryn Cramer, whose analysis in the anthology *The Ascent of Wonder* finally

acknowledged what should have been obvious all along. Hard SF is the vital heart of the field, the radiant core from which ideas and prototype worlds diffuse outwards to be appropriated by writers of lesser world-building skill but perhaps greater stylistic and literary sophistication. While there are other modes of SF that have their place, they remain essentially derivations of or reactions against hard SF, and cannot even be properly understood without reference to its tropes, conventions, and imagery.

Furthermore, Gregory Benford's essay in *The Ascent of Wonder* on the meaning of SF offered a characterization of the genre which may well prove final. He located the core of SF in the experience of "sense of wonder", not merely as a thalamic thrill but as the affirmation that the universe has a knowable order that is discoverable through reason and science.

I think I can go further than Hartwell or Kramer or Benford in defining the relationship between hard SF and the rest of the field. To do this, I need to introduce the concept linguist George Lakoff calls "radial category", one that is not defined by any one logical predicate, but by a central prototype and a set of permissible or customary variations. As a simple example, in English the category "fruit" does not correspond to any uniformity of structure that a

botanist could recognize. Rather, the category has a prototype "apple", and things are recognized as fruits to the extent that they are either (a) like an apple, or (b) like something that has already been sorted into the "like an apple" category.

Radial categories have central members ("apple", "pear", "orange") whose membership is certain, and peripheral members ("coconut", "avocado") whose membership is tenuous. Membership is graded by the distance from the central prototype — roughly, the number of traits that have to mutate to get one from being like the prototype to like the instance in question. Some traits are important and tend to be conserved across the entire radial category (strong flavor including sweetness) while some are only weakly bound (bright color).

In most radial categories, it is possible to point out members that are counterexamples to any single intensional ("logical") definition, but traits that are common to most of the core prototypes nevertheless tend to be strongly bound. Thus, "coconut" is a counterexample to the strongly-bound trait that fruits have soft skins, but it is sorted as "fruit" because (like the prototype members) it has an easily-chewable interior with a sweet flavor.

SF is a radial category in which the prototypes are certain classics of hard SF. This is true whether you are mapping individual works by affinity or subgenres like space opera, technology-of-magic story, utopian/dystopian extrapolation, etc. So in discussing the traits of SF as a whole, the relevant question is not "which traits are universal" but "which traits are strongly bound" — or, almost equivalently, "what are the shared traits of most of the core (hard-SF) prototypes"

The strong binding between hard SF and libertarian politics continues to be a fact of life in the field. It it is telling that the *only* form of politically-inspired award presented annually at the World Science Fiction Convention is the Libertarian Futurist Society's "Prometheus". There is no socialist, liberal, moderate, conservative or fascist equivalent of the class of libertarian SF writers including L. Neil Smith, F. Paul Wilson, Brad Linaweaver, or J. Neil Schulman; their books, even when they are shrill and indifferently-written polemical tracts, actually *sell* — and sell astonishingly well — to SF fans.

Of course, there are people in the SF field who find this deeply uncomfortable. Since the centrality of hard SF has become inescapable, resistance now takes the form of attempts to divorce hard SF from libertarianism — to preserve the methods and conceptual apparatus of hard SF while repudiating its political aura. Hartwell & Kramer's 2002 followup to *The Ascent of Wonder*, *The Hard SF Renaissance*, takes up this argument in its introduction and explanatory notes.

The Hard SF Renaissance presents itself as a dialogue between old-school Campbellian hard SF and an attempt to construct a "Radical Hard SF" that is not in thrall to right-wing tendencies. It is clear that the editors' sympathies lie with the "Radicals", not least from the very fact that they identify libertarianism as a right-wing phenomenon. This is an error characteristic of left-leaning thinkers, who tend to assume that anything not "left" is "right" and that approving of free markets somehow implies social conservatism.

Is the "Radical Hard SF" program possible? Partly this is a matter of definition. I have already shown that the SF genre *cannot* be culturally or politically conservative; by nature it must be prepared to contemplate – and implicitly advocate – radical change. So either the partisans of "Radical Hard SF" are just terminally confused, pushing against an open door, or what they really object to is hard SF's libertarian connection.

It's worth asking, then: is the intimate historical relationship between libertarian political thought and SF a mere accident, or is there an intrinsic connection? And not worth asking merely as a question about politics, either; we'll understand SF and its history better if we know the answer.

I think I know what John Campbell's answer would be, if he had not died the year that the founders of modern libertarianism broke with conservatism. I know what Robert Heinlein's was. They're the same as mine, a resounding yes – that there is a connection, and that the connection is indeed deep and intrinsic. But cultural history is littered with the corpses of zealots who attempted to yoke art to ideology with shallow arguments, only to be exposed as fools when the art became obsolescent before the ideology or (more often) vice-versa.

In the remainder of this essay I will nevertheless attempt to prove this point. My argument will center around the implications of a concept best known from First Amendment law: the "marketplace of ideas". I am going to argue specifically from the characteristics of hard SF, the prototypes of the radial category of SF. I'll use this argument to try to illuminate the central values of SF as a literature, and to explain the large historical pattern of failed revolutions against the Campbellian model.

Science fiction, as a literature, embraces the possibility of radical transformations of the human condition brought about through knowledge. Technological immortality, star drives, cyborging – characteristic SFnal tropes such as these are situated within a knowable universe, one in which scientific inquiry is both the precondition and the principal instrument of creating new futures.

SF is, broadly, optimistic about these futures. This is so for the simple reason that SF is fiction bought with peoples' entertainment budgets and people, in general, prefer happy endings to sad ones. But even when SF is not optimistic, its dystopias and cautionary tales tend to affirm the power of reasoned choices made in a knowable universe; they tell us that it is not through chance or the whim of angry gods that we fail, but through our *failure* to be intelligent, our failure to use the power of reason and science and engineering prudently.

At bottom, the central assumption of SF is that applied science is our best hope of transcending the

major tragedies and minor irritants to which we are all heir. Even when scientists and engineers are not the visible heroes of the story, they are the invisible heroes that make the story notionally possible in the first place, the creators of possibility, the people who liberate the future to become a different place than the present.

SF both satisfies and stimulates a sort of lust for possibility compounded of simple escapism and a complex intellectual delight in anticipating the future. SF readers and writers want to believe that the future not only can be different but can be different in many, many weird and wonderful ways, all of which are worth exploring.

All the traits (embrace of radical transformation, optimism, applied science as our best hope, the lust for possibilities) are weakly characteristic of SF in general – but they are *powerfully* characteristic of hard SF. Strongly bound, in the terminology of radial categories.

Therefore, hard SF has a bias towards valuing the human traits and social conditions that best support scientific inquiry and permit it to result in transformative changes to both individuals and societies. Also, of social equilibria which allow individuals the greatest scope for choice, for satisfying that lust for possibilities. And it is is here that we begin to get the first hints that the strongly-bound traits of SF imply a political stance – because not all political conditions are equally favorable to scientific inquiry and the changes it may bring. Nor to individual choice.

The power to suppress free inquiry, to limit the choices and thwart the disruptive creativity of individuals, is the power to strangle the bright transcendant futures of optimistic SF. Tyrants, static societies, and power elites fear change above all else – their natural tendency is to suppress science, or seek to distort it for ideological ends (as, for example, Stalin did with Lysenkoism). In the narratives at the center of SF, political power is the natural enemy of the future.

SF fans and writers have always instinctively understood this. Thus the genre's long celebration of individualist anti-politics; thus its fondness for voluntarism and markets over state action, and for storylines in which (as in Heinlein's archetypal *The Man Who Sold The Moon* (1951)) scientific breakthrough and free-enterprise economics blend into a seamless whole. These stances are not historical accidents, they are structural imperatives that follow from the lust for possibility. Ideological fashions come and go, and the field inevitably rediscovers itself afterwards as a literature of freedom.

This analysis should put permanently to rest the notion that hard SF is a conservative literature in any sense. It is, in fact, deeply and fundamentally radical – the literature that celebrates not merely science and technology but technology-driven social change as a permanent revolution, as the final and most inexorable foe of all fixed power relationships everywhere.

Earlier, I cited the following traits of SF's libertarian tradition: ornery and insistant individualism, veneration of the competent man, instinctive distrust of coercive social engineering and a rock-ribbed objectivism that values knowing how things work and treats all political ideologizing with

suspicion. All should now be readily explicable. These are the traits that mark the enemies of the enemies of the future.

The partisans of "Radical Hard SF", like those of the earlier failed revolutions, are thus victims of a category error, an inability to see beyond their own political maps. By jamming SF's native libertarianism into a box labeled "right wing" or "conservative" they doom themselves to misunderstanding the deepest imperatives of the genre.

By understanding these imperatives, on the other hand, we can explain the series of failed revolutions against the Campellian model that is the largest pattern in the history of modern SF. We can also predict two important things about the future of the SF genre itself.

One: people whose basic political philosophy is flatly incompatible with libertarianism will continue to find the SF mainstream an uncomfortable place to be. Therefore, sporadic ideological revolts against the Campbellian model of SF will continue, probably about the established rate of one per decade. The Futurians, the New Wave, the cyberpunks, and "Radical Hard SF" were not the end of that story, because the larger political questions that motivated those insurrections are not yet resolved.

Two: all these revolts will fail in pretty much the same way. The genre will absorb or routinize their literary features and discard their political agendas. And SF will continue to puzzle observers who mistake its anti-political DNA for conservatism while missing its underlying radicalism.

NO. STOP.

By Emily Ruth Taylor

~ ~ WINNING SUBMISSION ~ ~

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"Shall I read your faxes and voicemails out to you?"

Mel frowned, and the mirror scanned her expression. "You should not," she said, mimicking the voice of her house computer, in case it hadn't properly read her face. The expression recognition system was always wonky for her. That's another thing that Sean had always been going on about. "Your mouth is a straight line," he'd said. "That's not normal. I can't read you." And neither could their House. But the House was smarter than …

IMAGE: CC BY-SA ChtiTux, 2005. Available: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fax-amarys.jpg

She rolled her eyes. Sean might've faxed something. He would be at work now: "I'm naturally an early riser, unlike you, Mel." He generally sent her a detailed plan for their evening, based on the workload he received that morning on the company's main computer.

They both worked at a future forecasting company. Sean worked on the back end, though, with his programming and statistics background. Deathdays was his program, he liked to brag at dinner parties. Mel had told him over and over it was a conversation ender. Everyone had future forecasting done - they just didn't talk about it. It was impolite.

"Mel, no one wants to hear about your work," Sean had said once. There was a sarcastic lilt to his voice when he said the word 'work.' She dealt directly with customers. It was a way of saying, people cried on her shoulder. She worked in shifts. She and her associates were interchangeable. At least it was paying her student loans …

"Play cassette," she said, aloud. Some thoughts were so bleak that they could only be solved by a stadium rock tune with a three minute guitar solo in the middle.

Sean's voice came on through the speakers in the ceiling. "You are powerful. You are an influencer. You make friends easily …" God, he'd switched her music with his latest self-motivational tape. He'd gone to see one of those Mindfulness for Capitalists speakers with the guys from work and he'd been recording them ever since.

His voice droned on. "Stop!" She yelled. She was surprised by the vehemence in her voice. Luckily for her, the House wasn't able to save more than five minutes of memory at a time.

She had had their forecasts done a week ago. It was right after hackers had leaked the details of Brad and Angelina's relationship forecasts - after they had already divorced. 27% likelihood of separation. Had that been the final straw? Or the first? It was their competitor, luckily, that had been hacked.

Mel had known what their results would say. She just wanted confirmation. She was putting it off. The House was Sean's, of course. It had been five years. Where would she go? Her sister was living in tent somewhere in New York City. Their parents vacationed full-time on a cruise ship …

"You have one new fax," the House said.

"Is the fax from Sean?" she mouthed at the mirror, exaggerating her vowels. "The fax is from Sean," it replied obediently.

"Compose reply fax … " She started. "No. Stop." She threw her toothbrush at the sink and left the bathroom. Time to go to work. And after work, see Sean.

She closed the door, hurrying a little. Unlike the buses, the solar planes always ran on time.

"Fax sent to Sean," the House read, its voice glitching. "'No. Stop.'"

To more fully understand the increasingly science fictional present, every issue of MONI will include reviews of past SF works that take place in the CURRENT YEAR of the issue. After the new year we look forward to reviewing the 1971 *Name of the Game* episode "L.A. 2017" (which appears to be one of the earliest progenitors of the "cyberpunk" meme in visual media) but in this issue we will review Masamune Shirow's 1993 OVA *New Dominion Tank Police*, set in Newport City, Japan, in the future year of 2016.

The year is 2016. The heavily militarized tank police defend the megacity of NEWPORT against cybernetically enhanced criminals, nefarious megacorporations, and a twin pair of dangerous cat-eared sex androids who now grace the cover of this very volume, dear readers.

In a plethora of scenes the viewing audience potentially finds humorous, the inept yet militarily-equipped TANK POLICE ward off these threats, but not without inexplicably destroying private property and terrorizing innocent citizens, spurring calls for the tank unit's disbandment from the populace and even from THE MAYOR. But when a sudden wave of mysterious terrorist attacks strike the city, only the plucky TANK POLICE can secure peace and uncover the conspiracy behind the violence.

The series is set in a familiar "cyberpunk" universe, albeit with a lighter tone and seen from the perspective of law enforcement. The criminals are cybernetic low-lifes, the primary antagonists are suit-and-tie corporate supervillains, and the city is struck by periodic bouts of poisonous bacteria-ridden smog, due to all the intervening years before 2016 that we ignored the environmentalists' dire warnings. Despite the futuristic setting the characters still use floppy discs, CRT monitors, and payphones.

In one of the most interesting scenes (from the perspective of an actual occupant of the year 2016), a self-driving semi-truck is sent hurtling toward the city in an apparent terrorist attack while the police scramble to hack into the vehicle remotely.

Of course, autonomous vehicles are just on the horizon in reality but are seen as novel by the characters of the anime, who are apparently already well-accustomed to cybernetic implants, robotic spider mechs, and sex androids with strong AI who are in one episode seen operating a vehicle. Despite this, the driverless truck segment anticipates the real-world remote hacking of a fully automated Jeep Cherokee last year [1] by over two decades.

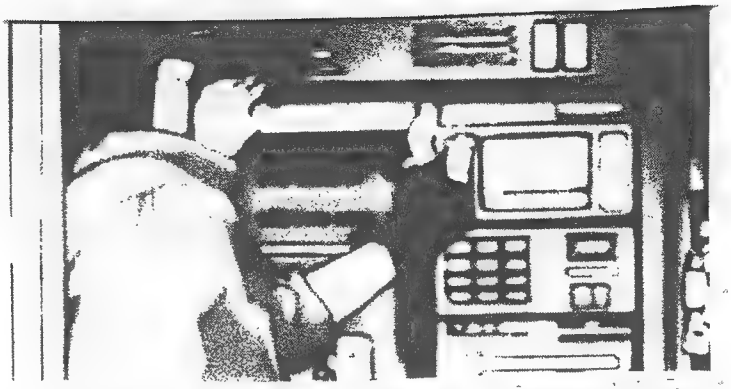
While the anime is clearly not intended to be taken seriously, we at the Editorial Board of MONI have ventured to do just that, dear readers.

As previously mentioned the series employs the common cyberpunk trope of an amoral private-sector antagonist. This time, the Evil Company(TM) is illegally selling "Virtual Drugs" (narcotics for cybernetically-enhanced brains) to drug lords, and dealing arms to rogue terrorist groups. Venerable stateswoman MAYOR WEATHERBY in her wisdom attempts to counter the Evil Company(TM)'s operations by imposing a complete ban on all private-sector manufacture and selling of weapons--because, you know, that worked really well for the Virtual Drug ban.

This is revealing not only of the underlying spirit of the "cyberpunk" subgenre as a whole but also of a mainstream attitude in America in 2016. If the narrative has already established that the government ban on Virtual Drugs has not hindered the Evil Company(TM)'s ability to sell them, then what impact could a complete ban on arms possibly have on the company's backdoor arms sales?

There is even a serious scene in which the evil subtly-Western-looking corporate executives are hilariously concerned that the gun control law will pass. It is in moments like these that the left-statist logic implicit in much of the cyberpunk subgenre most egregiously self-destructs.

Troubling more is that the audience is expected to admire THE MAYOR's noble ban on citizen-owned arms while scenes of outright abuse committed by the tax-funded, government-sponsored, militarily-equipped TANK POLICE are played up for comic relief.



Is it somehow a comical and endearing character trait that protagonist LEONA (your standard-issue "feisty anime tomboy") is so obsessively defensive of her tank that she has affectionately named it "BONAPARTE" while the populace she victimizes can not even buy a handgun?

In the end, the series is light-hearted, enjoyable, and kept our interest. Ultimately the five-episode sequence feels like practice for Masamune Shirow's more fully realized and serious work "Ghost in the Shell" (1995), with many of the characters, concepts and technologies overlapping among both pieces.

References

[1] "Hackers Remotely Kill a Jeep on the Highway—With Me in It", WIRED, 2015-07-21. [Online]. Available: https://www.wired.com/2015/07/hackers-remotely-kill-jeep-highway/.

Spornosexuality

Reed Perry, 2016-08-12.

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I just came across this study [1] by chance awhile scanning behavioral science news. This seems to be very relevant to the essay I wrote on the Manosphere and explains the obsession with lifting and "gainz" amongst what I guess I'll call the altright.

> *"Austerity has eroded young men's traditional means of value-creation so they have become increasingly reliant on their bodies as a means of feeling valuable in society. In theoretical terms, so-called 'spornosexuality' is an embodied response to material changes brought about by neoliberal austerity."*
>
> *The term 'spornosexuality', a portmanteau of 'sports star' and 'porn star', was coined in July 2014 by media commentator Mark Simpson, in an article in The Daily Telegraph about the rise of men attending the gym primarily for reasons of appearance, rather than for health or fitness.*

This is the main argument for lifting in the Manosphere. The health benefits or rise in testosterone are seen as a bonus. They have basically reduced their dating/mating value to how they look, similar to how women behave. I'm not arguing that it's cool to look like shit, but this seems like a component of modern metrosexuality, or Internet-oriented men, who advertise their bodies and put large amounts of time into manicuring themselves. Presumably, they want to be some kind of arm-candy for their date. Men taking fitness selfies seems like the modern male parallel to Instagram girls finding excuses to take pictures of their behinds.

Once again it appears that, in an attempt to challenge feminization and remain on top of the maw of postmodern degeneracy, the Manosphere was merely negotiating a space inside the postmodern dystopia, framing workout culture as masculine rebellion, when it actually reflects more superficial (female) tendencies.

If you look at film from the 1950s or 60s this change in male valuation becomes very clear.

Sean Connery was a major sex icon in his day, but he wasn't terribly fit, especially when compared to modern film stars. He was desirable to women not because of his physique, but because of his demeanor, and who he was, what he did. The level-headed,

R. Perry, "Spornosexuality", *War and Ecology*, 2016-08-12. [Online]. Available: http://www.warandecology.com/essay/spornosexuality/.

problem-solving, seductive hero who embodied dispassionate courage was gradually replaced with an obscenely roided-up waxed hero who is much more emotionally aggravated in comparison to mid-century protagonists. James Bond was the archetype of that cool headed soldier with style. Definitely not dependent on gym selfies.

I find it interesting that many modern action flics (Batman, Mission Impossible, the Jason Bourne series, etc) all feature male protagonists that are basically asexual. Not only are they asexual, they seem to have an indignant disinterest in women despite the fact they're far more physically fit than stars of the 50s and 60s.

The shallow narcissistic metrosexual of today, who is devoid of character, but bulging with chemical enhanced muscles, perhaps donning a well trimmed beard or expensive tattoos, is a kind of caricature of true manhood. This caricature has now become the role model of many men who then use their body as a facade for their lack of substance. It's another sad side-effect of postmodernity, which is such an all-permeating psychological state, it is difficult, if not impossible, to evade.

References

[1] "Austerity linked to rise of the 'spornosexual'", *EurekAlert!*, 2016-08-11. [Online]. Available: http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2016-08/uoea-alt081016.php.

The Man in the High Ecuadorian Embassy

Moni Staff, 2016-11-07.

He found himself studying the M4V again, searching for signs of tampering. If the footage had indeed been edited, it had been done by professionals. He could not find any obvious signs of manipulation, inconsistent perspective shifts for example, or motion blurs produced by known blurring algorithms. Hunched over his tiny ThinkPad, Julian sat at the desk in the cramped embassy room that had been his home these past four years, desperate to make sense of the video. It had been attached in the final email he'd received before "they" cut his internet, and for three weeks the footage haunted him. It showed what was certainly

IMAGE: CC BY-SA S. Bellini, 2012. Available:https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ecuadors_London_embassy_-_September_26,_2012.jpg

the same stage upon which Secretary Hillary Clinton and Republican candidate Jeb Bush met during the first debate of the 2016 presidential election over a month ago, at least it looked like it was, but the clip directly contradicted the lived experience of the 80 million viewers who'd tuned in that night. Julian Assange appeared to have obtained a genuine video of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton debating not a politician, but reality TV star and business magnate Donald Trump.

"And I think I did a great job and a great service not only for the country, but even for the President, in getting him to produce his birth certificate," the Donald said, brazenly, his shoulders broad, his hands gargantuan.

"This is not possible," Julian said, struggling to hear the clip over the heavy boot-steps of the European Central Bank Police mobilizing in the dark outside his window. He still couldn't understand what it meant. Up until "they" cut his internet he'd been closely following the race between Jeb Bush and Hillary Clinton. But this footage defied what he thought of as reality. Reality TV star Donald Trump--a viable threat

IMAGE: CC BY-SA Gage Skidmore, 2016.
Available:https://www.flickr.com/photos/gageskidmore/5440609290

against experienced and esteemed stateswoman Hillary Clinton in the US presidential race? It had to be a hoax. He took another sip of chamomile from his prized AC/DC mug, pretending that it calmed him. Staring at his window again, he wondered how far he could get if he jumped off the balcony and started running. Maybe he could get away, find somewhere safe.

No. They probably had orders to shoot him on sight.

A month had passed since he'd canceled the highly anticipated release of his "October Surprise," secret documents confirming Hillary Clinton's direct involvement in trafficking arms to ISIS and sabotaging the Sanders campaign from within. He knew the information would devastate Clinton's campaign, but privately he'd decided they should never be published. He was accustomed to anonymous death threats of course, but his contact in the Clinton Foundation had been found dead in his apartment in Williamsburg, officially deemed a suicide despite that the man had been shot in the back twelve times and found hanging from his ceiling fan by an iPhone 6S headphone cord. Since then looking at the documents made him sick, and up until "they" cut his internet, his Twitter feed had been ablaze with rumors of a drone strike strike against his embassy. The only way those documents were getting out would be if he got out of the building with them on a thumb drive. But releasing them would almost certainly mean losing his life. Maybe they should never get out.

He closed the ThinkPad and began thumbing through the Philip K. Dick paperback on his desk. He'd requested several novels in an earnest attempt at maintaining

his sanity, but he hadn't made it more than a couple pages through any of them. Even as he began reading, he was thinking about the video file. It must be a fake, and a damn good one at that, suggesting some parallel universe, some alternative to the 2016 presidential race between Secretary Clinton and candidate Jeb Bush...

Living four years under strict visitation rules in what amounted to a prison was a strange kind of torture in its own, but now without a way to communicate with the outside world, he was questioning his mental health. Had he dreamed up Jeb's win in the Republican primaries? Maybe it actually was Trump running against Clinton this whole time. But that can't be true, he'd seen all the debates, read all the stories, he even had documents leaked from Jeb's campaign.

He'd read an entire chapter of Philip K. Dick but couldn't remember any of it. How long had it been since he'd had a conversation with a person? Who was it? What was it about? Day in, day out, a single cramped room, complete solitude. Maybe they already droned his building and this is the afterlife. Maybe this is hell...

Enough. He set aside the paperback and returned to the laptop, opening saved clips of the heavily publicized debate between Jeb Bush and Hillary Clinton, dispatches from the consensus reality.

"Well, of course I don't concur with what my opponent said about my own record and the things that I've said," either Jeb Bush or Hillary Clinton said, extremely politely. Julian brushed white hair out of his eyes, studying the footage with a newfound suspicion, careful to see artifacts of video manipulation. "And if Israel is attacked," whichever candidate continued, "we have their back, not just diplomatically, not just culturally, but militarily. That's number one."

The 2016 race between Bush and Clinton was shaping up to be yet another repeat of the last half-century of U.S. politics--barely indistinguishable candidates desperate to emphasize their minute differences with talking points assembled by an algorithm and tested thoroughly on focus groups. Wondering how easily an entire race could be faked, he squinted at the pixels that supposedly represented Jeb Bush and Hillary Clinton. Two members chosen from the same coven, opponents in public yet working together behind the scenes, opposite sides of the same coin, a boot stamping in a human face, forever.

A new email notification suddenly appeared on his display. Shouldn't be possible. He closed the VLC window and checked the network connection, wondering if it had been restored. No. The icon showed zero bars.

"You're losing it, Julian," he said aloud. He opened a terminal window and punched the commands to ping the server for the new message, his heart racing. It appeared on his screen. He froze, terrified. The PGP-encrypted message had come from his contact in the Clinton Foundation, a man who should be dead. Could they have spoofed his address? How did they get his private key? He was struggling for breath as he opened the attached file, *the_grasshopper_lies_heavy.zip*.

It contained a plethora of video files and news articles detailing the mysterious race between Trump and Clinton, seemingly confirming the authenticity of the previous video. He read through Trump's preposterous victory in the primaries, and of his unprecedented rejection by GOP elites Bush, Romney and McCain. He read about the FBI twice clearing Clinton's name on activities for which the plebeians would have been imprisoned. It was a version of 2016 that shouldn't be real.

"And now you want to approve Trans-Pacific Partnership. You were totally in favor of it," Donald Trump said on the familiar stage in another video of the debate, addressing his opponent Secretary Hillary Clinton.

"No one will believe this," Julian said. The room around him spun and he knew what had to be done.

"Well, Donald, I know you live in your own reality, but that is not the facts," Clinton replied tersely.

He copied the two video files along with all of the remaining Clinton Foundation documents to a thumb drive, which he put in his pocket. The marching continued outside and he thought he could hear helicopters now. He put the ThinkPad in his duffle bag and walked to the balcony, his legs feeling heavy. He stared at his reflection in the glass for a moment before opening the window and stepping out into the dark November night. He stood on the balcony and stared at the armies over the railing, stroking the thumb drive in his pocket. The cold air felt good.

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SOUTHFIELD, MI—Bored with scaring elderly misers, the Ghost of Christmas Future is spending the holiday season taunting modern children with visions of Christmas 2016's hottest toy: the Sony PlayStation 5, a 2,048-bit console featuring a 45-Ghz trinary processor, CineReal graphics booster with 2-gig biotexturing, and an RSP connector for 360-degree online-immersion play.

"Ghost Of Christmas Future Taunts Children With Visions Of PlayStation 5", *The Onion*, 2002-12-18. [Online]. Available: http://www.theonion.com/article/ghost-of-christmas-future-taunts-children-with-vis-14.

"You know how kids are—a year is an eternity to them," the wraithlike specter said Monday during a visit to the Southfield home of 13-year-old Josh Kuehn. "So just imagine showing them something they'll have to wait 14 years for. Teasing them with a glimpse of the PS5 is the ultimate torture. They absolutely lose their minds. It's like saying, 'Hey, kid, you'll be an old man before you ever get to touch this.'"

The Ghost of Christmas Future said he has visited more than 125,000 homes since Thanksgiving, offering children an agonizing sneak peek at what they cannot have for another decade and a half.

"I like to appear in the living room with a PS5 hooked up to 2016's most popular TV, the 4'x8' Hi-Def Sony Titania," the Ghost said. "Then, I'll say in my best spooky voice, 'Jimmy! Behold what your kids will be playing while you're slaving away at an office job to support them!'"

Driving the children mad with PS5 lust, the Ghost said, is a multi-step process.

"I usually start by showing them Toteki Aluminum, one of the future's most popular fight-and-chase games," the Ghost said. "It's far from the best available in 2016, but it always blows their mind to see the guy get hit with the falling sign while the drops of sweat fly off his face. You can see the whole scene, distorted, in each of the individual drops. That gives them a good preliminary idea of the graphics technology we're dealing with."

The Ghost said he then likes to show Airsledz, a racing game in which jet-powered sleds whoosh through a four-dimensional racing course in the sky. The game, he said, enables the player to compete online against dozens of other players all around the world.

"They always ask if you can play it on the Internet—it's so cute how they still call it 'the Internet'—and I tell them, 'Hey, you can play this against 63 other PS5 owners simultaneously. At least you can in 14 years,'" the Ghost said. "And you should see their jaws hit the floor when they learn about the add-on accessories that enable users to actually fly around the room during gameplay."

Once the capabilities of the system are conveyed to the children, the Ghost likes to push them further over the edge by showing them games specially targeted to their age group.

Younger children, he said, salivate upon seeing Level One of Zonic Fugue. In it, Zonic, the indigo-colored son of Sonic The Hedgehog, faces off against Chuckles The Echidna in a Terrordactyl sky-joust, attempting to earn the Ankle Rockets he needs to gather the five Chaos Sapphires that, when combined, form the master key that opens the Melody Dome.

To break the spirits of children 12 and up, the Ghost runs a brief demonstration of Back To Werewolf Island. The horror-action thriller, he said, will be produced in full 10.8 Omneo sound and feature new music from 40 of 2016's hottest skagcore acts, including FU3P, Dredgerous, and Frances Cobain.

"Sometimes, the kids will start getting defensive and say, 'Yeah, well, I don't know any of those

characters, so big deal,'" the Ghost said. "That's when I pull out DC vs. Marvel."

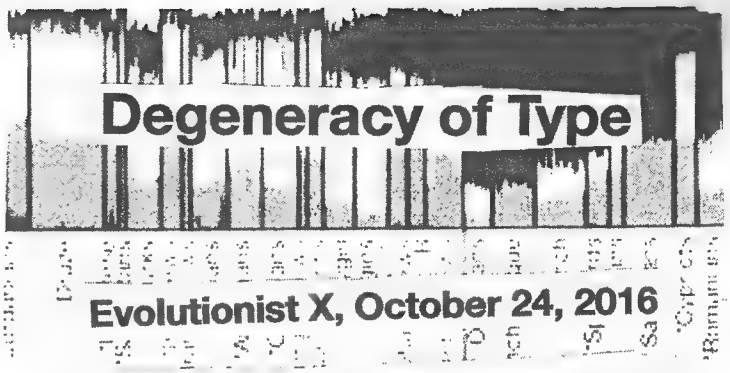
The Ghost said he shows the children a brief clip of DC vs. Marvel, in which cinema-realistic figures of Spider-Man and the Joker dash across impossibly detailed city streets, attacking each other with dozens of different offensive maneuvers while leaping, somersaulting, and throwing objects.

"They usually start trembling at that point," the Ghost said. "That's when I go in for the kill by casually mentioning that the game comes packaged with the 2016 feature film of the same name—not on DVD, of course, but on SCAP. Ten times better."

The few children unbroken by DC vs. Marvel are invariably finished off by the sight of Star Wars—Episode IX: Jedi Destiny, a game which employs the world's most advanced artificial-intelligence algorithm to place the player inside the film's climactic battle sequence on the planet Mon Jeedam.

"With more than 12,000 distinct soldiers, creatures, and vehicles fighting at once, and the option to command the New Republic Fleet, the Imperial Armada, or the Yuuzhan Vong Invasion Force, it's not merely the best *Star Wars* game that's ever existed; it's an interactive film that looks better than any movie that's ever been made. No child has failed to sob hysterically at the sight of it."

The PlayStation 5 will be available in stores Nov. 12, 2016, at a list price of Δ399 New Dollars ($199 Canadian).



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If "evolution" is a word that comes up a lot in the late 1800s (even before Darwin,) "degenerate" is the word of the 1930s and 40s.

In Kabloona [1], (1941) an ethnography of the Eskimo (Inuit) of northern Canada, de Poncins speaks highly of the "pure" Eskimo, whose ancestral way of life remains unsullied by contact with European culture, and negatively of the "degenerate Eskimo," caught in the web of international trade, his lifestyle inexorably changed by proximity and contact with the West.

"Degeneracy of Type", *Evolutionist X*, 2016-10-24. [Online]. Available: https://evolutionistx.wordpress.com/2016/10/24/degeneracy-of-type/.

In Caughey's History of the Pacific Coast [2], (1933) he writes:

> The Northwest Coast Indians felt the ill effects of too much contact with British, Russian, and American traders. The rum of the trading schooners was one of several factors contributing to the degeneracy of those not actually exterminated.

In Nutrition and Physical Degeneration [3], (1939) Dr. Price argues that modern foods are low in nutrient value and inferior to many native, ancestral diets, and that the spread of this "white man's food" caused an epidemic of disease, tooth decay, and skeletal mal-formation, which he documents extensively. Dr. Price refers to the change in appearance from one generation to the next, coinciding with the introduction of modern foods, as "interrupted heredity." The parents represent "pure racial type," with strong teeth and bones, while the children, bow-legged and sick, suffer physical degeneration.

(This kind of language that Dr. Price uses sometimes confuses us moderns, because we flinch reflexively at phrases like "racial type" when in fact his argument is the inverse of the racist arguments of his day.)

Now, there is something twee about anthropologists (and historians) who long for the preservation of other peoples' cultures when the people within those cultures seem to prefer modernity. Igloos and teepees may seem fun and exotic to those of us who don't live in them, but the people who do might genuinely prefer a house with central heat and a toilet. Obviously the whole anthropologist schtick involves people who really like studying cultures that are distinct from their own, and if the people in those cultures adopt Western lifestyles, then there just isn't much to study anymore.

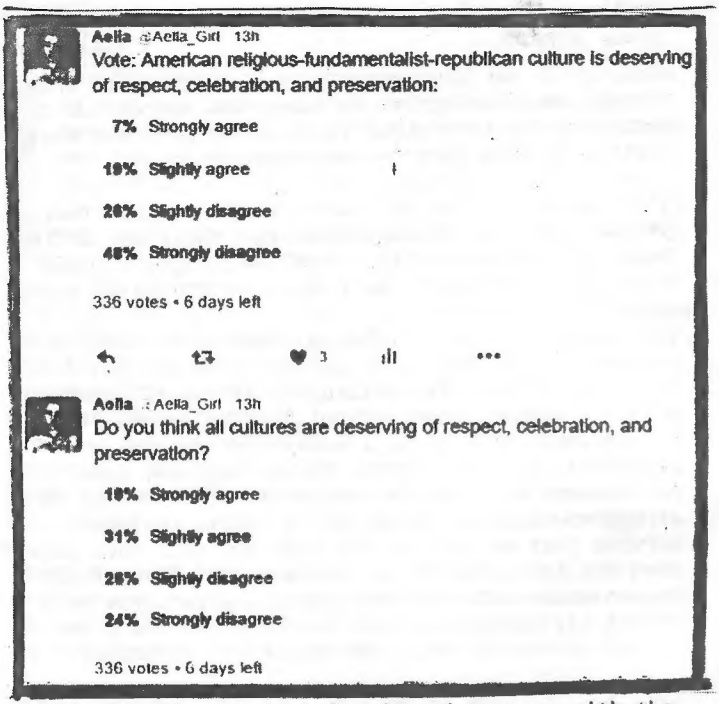
(Imagine if we found out tomorrow that all of what we thought were variations in human DNA turned out to be contamination errors due to local pollen, and vast swathes of this blog became moot.)

It is easy to write off such notions as just feel-good sentimentalizing by outsiders, but these are at least outsiders with more first hand knowledge of these cultures than I have, so I think we should at least consider their ideas.

The degeneracy described as a result of contact with the West is not just physical or cultural, but also moral. A culture, fully-fledged, is one of humanity's greatest technologies, a tool for the total transmission of a group's knowledge, morals, and behaviors. Your ancestors, facing much the same environment as yourself, and armed with similar tools, struggled to obtain food, marry, raise children, and survive just as you do. The ones who succeeded passed down the lessons of their success, and these lessons became woven into the tapestry of culture you were raised in, saving you much of the trial-and error effort of reproducing your ancestors' struggles.

Some people claim to believe that all cultures are equally valuable and important. I don't. I think cultures that practice things like cannibalism [4], animal sacrifice [5], and child rape [6] are bad and I don't cry for their disappearance. But virtually every culture has at least some good features, or else it wouldn't have come about in the first place.

Cultural lessons stem from the practical-"Ice the runners of your sled to make it run more smoothly"-to


Aella @Aella_Girl 13h
Vote: American religious-fundamentalist-republican culture is deserving of respect, celebration, and preservation:
7% Strongly agree
19% Slightly agree
26% Slightly disagree
48% Strongly disagree
336 votes • 6 days left
3
Aella @Aella_Girl 13h
Do you think all cultures are deserving of respect, celebration, and preservation?
19% Strongly agree
31% Slightly agree
26% Slightly disagree
24% Strongly disagree
336 votes • 6 days left

the moral-"Share your belongings in common with the tribe"-to the inscrutable-"don't eat the totem animal." (Some of these beliefs may be more important than others.) Throughout all of recorded human history, most of us have passed on bodies of moral teachings under the name of "religion," whether we believe in the literal truth of mythic stories or not.

Rapid cultural change-not the gentle sort that percolates slowly across generations, but massive variety precipitated by an industrial revolution or the sudden introduction of a few thousand years' worth of technological advancement to a long-isolated people-outstrips a society's ability to provide meaningful moral or practical guidance. Simply put: people don't know what to do.

Take alcohol. People have probably been producing fermented beverages for at least 10,000 years, or for about as long as we've been trying to store pots of grain and fruit. The French have wine, Mongolians have fermented horse milk, the Vikings fermented honey and the Founding Fathers drank a lot of apple cider.

Alcohol has beneficial effects-few pathogens survive the fermentation process [7]-and obviously harmful effects. Societies that traditionally produced large quantities of alcohol have evolved social norms and institutions to help people enjoy the beneficial effects and avoid the bad ones. France, for example [8], which in 2014 produce 4.5 billion liters of wine and consumed 2.8 billion liters of the same, is not a nation of violent, wife-beating, car-crashing drunkards. French social norms emphasize moderate wine consumption accompanied by food, friends, and family.

By contrast, in societies where alcohol was suddenly introduced via contact with whites, people don't have these norms, and the results-like rampant alcoholism on Native American reservations-have been disastrous. These societies can-and likely will-learn to handle alcohol, but it takes time.

Our own society is undergoing its own series of rapid changes-industrialization, urbanization, post-industrialization, the rise of the internet, etc.

Andean cultures have been cultivating coca leaves for at least 3,000 years, apparently without much trouble, while the introduction of crack/cocaine to the US has been rather like dropping bombs on all of our major cities.

The invention of fairly reliable contraception and the counter-culture of the '60s and '70s led to the spread of "free love," which in turn triggered skyrocketing gonorrhea rates. Luckily gonorrhea can be treated with antibiotics (at least until it becomes antibiotic resistant,) but it's still a nasty disease-one internet acquaintance of mine caught gonorrhea, took antibiotics and thought he was in the clear, but then doctors discovered that the inside of his penis was full of scar tissue that was dangerously closing off his bladder. They had basically cut him a new urethra once they were done removing all of the scar tissue, and he spent the next few months in constant, horrible pain, even while on medication.

And to add insult to injury, everyone in his social circle just thought he was bitter, jealous, and trying to make his ex-girlfriend look bad when he tried to warn them that they shouldn't sleep with her because she gave him gonorrhea.

Of course, gonorrhea is just the tip of the horrifying iceberg [9].

By contrast, the Amish look pretty darn healthy.

Degeneracy isn't just a sickness of the body; it's a falling apart of all of the morals and customs that hold society together and give people meaning and direction in their lives. You don't have to waste years trying to "find yourself" when you already have a purpose, but when you have no purpose but to feed yourself, it's easy to become lost.

I should note that Dr. Price didn't just examine the teeth of Eskimo and Aborigines, but also of Scots, Swiss, and Americans. His conclusion-nutritional degeneracy due to contact with modern foods-was the same regardless of culture. (Note: nutrition and food production have changed since 1939.) Or as Scott Alexander recently put it [10]:

> I am pretty sure there was, at one point, such a thing as western civilization. I think it involvec things like dancing around maypoles and copying Latin manuscripts. At some point Thor might have been involved. That civilization is dead. It summoned an alien entity from beyond the void which devoured its summoner and is proceeding to eat the rest of the world.

Well, that sounds a fair bit more dire than Dr. Price's assessment. Let's assume Scott is being poetic and perhaps exaggerating for effect. Still: massive cultural changes can sweep the normative rug out from beneath your feet and leave you injured and confused. It will take time-perhaps centuries-for society to fully adjust to the technological changes of the past hundred years. Right now, everyone is still muddling through, trying to figure out what will kill us and what will save us.

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